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Western Europe: Evolving Public Attitudes Toward NATO and the Superpowers

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An Intelligence Assessment

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*EUR 85-10088
May 1985*

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [] Office of
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welcome and may be directed to the Chief,
European Issues Division, EURA, []

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**Western Europe: Evolving
Public Attitudes Toward
NATO and the Superpowers**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 8 May 1985
was used in this report.*

We believe that, in the wake of the “neutron bomb” and INF controversies of the past decade, West European governments are more inclined than in the past to take public opinion into account when they form their security policies. The Allies often claim public attitudes as a reason or excuse why they cannot be more positive and forthright in their support for agreed Allied positions. They generally seem less willing, moreover, to use NATO’s symbolic popularity to sell Alliance policies to their constituents.

Public opinion surveys indicate that “NATO” remains a powerful symbol of shared Western cultural and political values. Majorities of respondents in all Alliance member states:

- Support NATO membership.
- Consider the Alliance “essential” to their national security.
- Retain a generally favorable view of US society and institutions.
- Trust the sincerity of US arms control policies more than Soviet positions.

At the same time, polls also indicate popular skepticism toward specific security policies. Majorities or pluralities oppose increases in defense spending, INF modernization, and the use—under any circumstances—of nuclear weapons.

The polls also show that many West Europeans would like their governments to gain more control over their own security from both Moscow and Washington. We think these attitudes will manifest themselves in continuing suspicions of the motives behind NATO arms modernization programs—particularly those initiated by the United States—and pressure for arms control initiatives covering virtually every category of weapons system:

- In particular, strong public opposition to nuclear weapons suggests that West Europeans are vulnerable to Soviet proposals for an agreement barring their initial use.

As expected, leftwing and better educated West Europeans are the most opposed to US and Alliance policies. Younger respondents are also more skeptical than their elders, although recent data suggest that criticism of the Alliance has waned a bit among younger West Europeans.

National Differences. Polls suggest that, in the wake of the INF debate, many *West Germans* have become dissatisfied with Alliance policies and half support a reunified, neutral Germany, although surveys show that at

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least three-quarters support "NATO." As many as half do not trust the United States to defend Western Europe.

Italians present a different problem. They are so satisfied with the status quo that—more than other West Europeans—they oppose INF deployment and defense spending increases.

In our view, Italian Communist toleration of INF and respect (so far) for the US position on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) help prevent negative Italian public opinion toward NATO military policies from crystallizing. PCI leaders reportedly are impressed with US arguments for SDI.

On the positive side, polling suggests that *Norwegians* are more willing than other West Europeans to increase military preparedness and defense spending and less reluctant to fight for their own defense. Norwegians, nevertheless, are as "allergic" to nuclear weapons as others in Western Europe.

Also encouraging is the decline in Peace Movement activism evident in recent polls. While most West Europeans remain sympathetic to Peace Movement goals, fewer are willing to demonstrate or otherwise participate in efforts to thwart INF deployment or other Alliance policies.

Opportunity and Challenge. In conclusion—assuming that West Europeans retain a fundamentally negative view of the Soviet Union—we believe that the crucial issue is whether governments are willing to make maximum public relations efforts to present arms modernization initiatives as the irreplaceable underpinning of the positive symbolic value of NATO and the United States as an ally. We believe that such efforts can blunt the Peace Movement and strengthen solidarity behind specific projects, but are unlikely to increase support for higher defense spending.

Belgian success in carrying through on its basing commitments indicates that governments can push through some controversial programs if they have the will to do so. The Belgian decision will marginally help condition a suspicious Dutch public to accepting their deployment responsibility—should the government decide to honor its basing commitment:

- Polls suggest that more and more Dutch are resigned to deployment and are increasingly willing to support the Netherlands' continuing some nuclear role.

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We believe that governments—should they decide to do so—may be able to mold favorable public views toward SDI. Preliminary data indicate that—outside Italy—West Europeans are either favorably disposed toward the concept of strategic defense or undecided. In addition, they may not share their governments' expressed concerns that SDI could decouple US and West European security.

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Western Europe: Evolving Public Attitudes Toward NATO and the Superpowers

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Introduction

This paper is a detailed examination of West European public opinion on security issues of critical interest to the Western Alliance. It is based on polling data from USIA and a number of West European firms. The paper discusses public opinion in most Allied countries (the United Kingdom, West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark), as well as Sweden. It emphasizes the major Allies, however—and among them what we deem to be particularly interesting opinions in West Germany and Italy. We attempt to interpret patterns inherent in or implied by the data and, in addition, offer observations concerning the relationship between public opinion and government policy. We note historical trends in cases where the pollster has asked the same question over time, attempt to account for differences in the pollster's wording, and note differences in responses to surveys apparently asking for similar information.

paper—suggest, however, that criticism of the Alliance has waned a bit among younger West Europeans.

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Neutralism and Other Security Alternatives

Neutralism shows considerable strength in most countries. According to an International Herald Tribune/Atlantic Institute poll in late 1983, majorities or pluralities in West Germany (57 percent), the Netherlands (53 percent), the United Kingdom (45 percent), and France (43 percent) supported “a move toward neutralism in Western Europe.” This poll almost certainly exaggerated the strength of neutralist sentiment by not presenting neutrality and membership in the Alliance as mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, in a highly publicized December 1984 poll, Allensbach reported that 57 percent of West Germans supported the idea of a reunified, neutral Germany. While published results did not clarify whether respondents were given a choice between neutrality and “NATO,” and we believe that this poll reflects support for reunification as much as for neutrality, we consider it significant that—when linked—the two concepts draw a positive reaction.

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Support for “NATO”

Opinion polls taken in Western Europe since initial INF deployment demonstrate that “NATO” remains a popular rallying point for Western unity. West European popular support for NATO membership remains at stable—and very high—levels. According to a 1983 poll in West Germany, even 67 percent of INF opponents support continued West German membership in the Alliance.

In West Germany neutralist sentiment is not a new phenomenon. Allensbach polls indicate that support for neutralism stood at 38 percent in 1969—at a high point of Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*—rose to 50 percent in 1971, and eased to 43 percent in 1972 and to 38 percent by the end of the decade. We believe that the current sympathy for neutralism reflects:

- Emphasis by Social Democratic and Green politicians on anti-NATO themes and the fear of war.
 - Chancellor Kohl's stress on intra-German relations.
- In addition, we believe that significant West German doubt about NATO's ability to prevent an attack or defend against one should deterrence fail contributes to neutralist sentiment (see table 1). (We cannot explain the sudden drop in West German confidence between June and December 1984.)

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On the other hand, polls also indicate popular skepticism toward specific security policies. Majorities or pluralities oppose increases in defense spending, INF modernization, and the use, under any circumstances, of nuclear weapons. As expected, younger, better educated, and left-leaning respondents are generally less supportive of Alliance policies than their elders, the less educated, and those on the political right. Recent data—to be discussed in detail later in the

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National Security and Other Concerns

We believe that West European public opinion on security issues is best understood in the context of overall public priorities. USIA data, presented in table 2, indicate that neither the "threat of war" nor "nuclear weapons" supplant unemployment as the leading West European public priority. In addition, environmental issues are an important rival for attention in certain countries. [redacted]

We believe that the political context of security debates already has had a stronger influence on INF and other Alliance problems than public opinion. In our judgment, for example, the current Belgian decision to base cruise missiles was shaped primarily by coalition politics rather than by public opinion, considerations of Alliance solidarity or the East-West military balance. [redacted]

We note that fewer West Germans (as a percent of the total) than other West Europeans expressed concern over nuclear weapons and the threat of war. We believe that—in view of other polling data cited in this paper—this reflects more West German preoccupation with unemployment than unconcern with security issues. Even in this poll nuclear weapons and the threat of war were of greater concern to West Germans than any issue other than unemployment. [redacted]

The USIA data are consistent with findings of a Harris poll conducted in October 1983, but outside West Germany they show an increase in concern over security issues compared with USIA data reported in May 1983. At that time the threat of war and INF deployment were priority issues for only 10 to 20 percent of West European respondents, and only in

West Germany and the Netherlands was opinion at the high end of this range. On the other hand, polling by a consortium of West European firms suggests that public fears of a world war have declined in recent years. In 1980, 34 percent of respondents feared a world war "within 10 years," but in November 1984 only 13 percent still felt this way. [redacted]

Differences in the USIA and West European consortium questions probably explain some of the difference in the results; we believe that the consortium, by providing a wide time envelope, did not present respondents with as urgent a problem as posed by USIA. Nevertheless, the consortium poll—taken six months after the USIA survey—may reflect the impact on West Europeans of recent improvements in East-West relations. [redacted]

We believe that recent revelations about deforestation have increased environmental concerns in West Germany. In our view, this trend, coupled with West German security concerns, fuels support for the Greens, indicating that they probably are not a transient phenomenon [redacted]

In Italy, the Communists apparently believe that the Greens are more attractive for their ecological stance than their security policy. [redacted]

[redacted] Italian
[redacted] Communists were concerned that the Greens could lure younger voters on environmental issues, but were not worried about Green positions on disarmament.

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Table 1
West German Confidence in NATO's Ability
To Prevent or Defend Against an Attack

Percent

	March 1981	July 1981	July 1982	June 1984	December 1984
Confidence in NATO's ability to prevent an attack					
Great deal/fair amount	46		50	59	40
Not very much/none at all	40		38	33	43
Confidence in NATO's ability to defend against an attack					
Great deal/fair amount		41	46	51	35
Not very much/none at all		46	41	38	47

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Table 2
"Greatest Concerns" of Selected
West European Publics, 1984

Percent ^a

	France	West Germany	United Kingdom	Italy	Norway	Switzerland
Unemployment	78	52	60	69	64	85
Threat of war	47	14	40	56	30	40
Nuclear weapons	26	15	43	39	31	33
Crime	30	10	36	58	12	34
Social injustice	27	12	23	28	15	32
Inflation	39	9	18	38	3	20
Excessive government spending	21	5	12	19	4	13
Poor political leadership	24	7	19	25	9	4
Energy crisis	15	4	15	19	1	13
Inadequate defense	7	2	11	7	4	5
Other/no answer	2	5	1	3	3	NEGL

^a Multiple answers allowed.

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According to most polls, many West Europeans prefer neutrality to a security system without the United States. Most polls since 1978 have indicated that, when asked to choose an alternative to NATO, twice as many respondents in the United Kingdom, Italy, and West Germany support neutralism or "no military alliance" than favor a strictly West European security arrangement. One poll, however, suggests that Italians, to a greater degree than elsewhere, support defense cooperation outside the NATO framework. Last December Italian experts at NATO reported that 28 percent of their countrymen favored the establishment of a West European defense community "if possible within NATO but outside it if necessary." This latter option showed even greater strength among Socialists and adherents of other lay parties than among Communists. [REDACTED]

West German and Italian Attitudes Toward the United States

Polling data indicate that the United States, like NATO, retains significant popularity in all Allied countries. We believe that the United States—like the Alliance—is a symbol of wartime and postwar Western unity and of Western political and cultural values. In Italy and West Germany, however, the connection between symbolic values and specific policies is weak. We find that attitudes in those countries provide an interesting contrast. In Italy, we believe that complacency about US support, coupled with a relaxed attitude toward the Soviet threat, contributes to public reluctance to spend more for defense. In West Germany, on the other hand, doubts about US reliability and relatively strong neutralist sentiment suggest that support there for NATO itself may be less firm than appears on the surface. [REDACTED]

West German Nervousness

In West Germany, faith in US political institutions and arms control policy is offset by skepticism toward Washington's foreign policy. USIA findings published in 1984 indicated that about half of the West Germans polled—especially those under 35—had little or no confidence in US ability to deal responsibly with world problems. A 40-percent plurality of West German respondents to one USIA survey believed that US policies have increased the likelihood of war. Only a third believed these policies have promoted peace, and almost a third believed that the "aggressive

policies" of the United States toward Moscow are a main cause of international tension. Over half believed that US economic policies have been more harmful than helpful to West Germany. Similarly, USIA found that majorities or pluralities of West Germans believed that both superpowers:

- Interfere in other countries' affairs.
- Are willing to use chemical weapons or have used them in the past few years.
- Seek world domination.

Almost half had little or no confidence that the United States will honor international peace agreements (74 percent had those feelings toward the Soviets). The US Embassy in Bonn, quoting these polls, noted last September that 48 percent of West Germans believed that Washington is attempting to gain military superiority over the USSR (up from 39 percent in 1983). [REDACTED]

In addition, USIA reports that the number of West Germans who have confidence in the US commitment to defend Western Europe plummeted from 52 percent in April 1982 to 27 percent in the summer of 1984. There was a slight recovery in December, but the drop remains significant:

	Percent	
	Great Deal/ Fair Amount	Not Very Much/ None at All
West Germany		
July 1981	48	38
April 1982	52	37
July 1982	49	39
July 1983	43	50
June 1984	27	63
December 1984	35	49
Western Europe, June 1984		
United Kingdom	52	43
Italy	58	39
Belgium	46	43
Netherlands	41	42
Denmark	45	43
Norway	60	31
West Germany	27	63

[REDACTED]

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The US Embassy in Bonn, in commenting on responses to this question, discussed the hypothesis that INF deployment has led to West German doubts about the US defense commitment. According to this view, West Germans—especially younger West Germans—believe that deployment would merely confine a nuclear war to Europe. USIA data indicate that many West Germans have little or no confidence in US foreign policy:

	Percent	
	Great Deal/ Fair Amount	Not Very Much/ None at All
West Germany		
December 1981	34	48
December 1982	48	42
December 1983	34	53
December 1984	38	49
Western Europe, June 1984		
United Kingdom	55	42
Italy	64	34
Belgium	41	46
Netherlands	38	50
Denmark	41	48
Norway	49	44
West Germany	41	52

Given the importance of the “coupling” of US and West European security in NATO lore, we believe that the debate over INF has led West Germans to increasingly question the worth of ties to the United States and the Alliance, even though they continue to find “NATO,” in the symbolic sense, essential.

Italian Complacency

Italians present a different problem. Italian respondents to several polls are particularly skeptical of NATO and US policies—toward INF and conventional defense spending, for example—but are more certain than other West Europeans of US support in case of attack (78 percent, according to the most recent USIA poll). USIA also found that Italian respondents were the most confident (61 percent) that NATO can defend Western Europe from a Soviet invasion.

We believe that confidence in US support complements, rather than contradicts, the skeptical Italian view of US policy. Italians, in our view:

- Take US support and overall NATO military strength for granted.
- Do not consider military modernization a pressing concern.
- Are unimpressed with US warnings about Soviet military policies.
- Are more inclined than other West Europeans to believe that either superpower is likely to start a war.

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Attitudes Toward the USSR

Polls indicate that West European trust in Soviet judgment and policy still ranks far below the public's faith in the United States and, in fact, is near historic lows. As shown in figure 1, Soviet negotiating credibility has declined in Western Europe since the start of INF talks in 1981. This indicates that Moscow's propaganda efforts clearly have failed to convince respondents that it is more serious than Washington in its search for arms control, and we believe that the Soviets' walkout from the Geneva INF talks in 1983 hurt their public image.

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Sweden provides the most striking example of Moscow's public relations problem in Western Europe. The percentage of respondents believing the USSR to be a “threat” or “unfriendly” rose from 19 percent in 1981—the year when a Soviet submarine ran aground near the Karlskrona naval base—to 86 percent in December 1984. We believe that recent public Soviet complaints that Sweden is moving toward the West may have strengthened public resentment of Soviet interference in Swedish affairs.

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Polls indicate that few West Europeans fear a Soviet attack on Western Europe, although more are concerned with attempts at political intimidation. The Italian and Belgian publics appear particularly complacent concerning the Soviet military threat. We believe—judging from editorials in important West

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An Italian Proposal

Most governments have emphasized the need to combat negative attitudes toward Alliance security policies; some West European officials, however, argue it would be more fruitful to exploit positive sentiment for "NATO." An Italian initiative would attempt to rekindle public enthusiasm for Alliance policies by reminding West Europeans that the ideals and purposes that gave birth to NATO remain the foundation of Western unity.

In August 1984, Italian representatives at NATO headquarters suggested that Allied foreign ministers issue a declaration to review Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty, especially its language calling on members to bring about a "better understanding" of NATO's purposes and institutions. While the suggestion got lost amid other business at the December Ministerial meetings, Italian officials continue to express their belief that a study of Western ideals and values will impress younger West Europeans with the cultural, economic, and political contributions made by Alliance institutions, particularly the nonmilitary ones.

While most Allies have lauded Rome's intentions, the United Kingdom, West Germany, and France have expressed reservations. Paris fears that the initiative might lead to a discussion of West European economic issues, a subject the Allies agree is beyond the

Alliance's competence. The British worry that discussion of one article could lead to a divisive reexamination of the North Atlantic Treaty as a whole.

In our view, the Italian proposal has promise. Polling data indicate that most West Europeans continue to approve of the West's cultural and political traditions even while they are skeptical of the Alliance's military structures. We believe that governments could usefully challenge the assumptions of the Peace Movement—still on the defensive in the wake of initial INF deployment—if they present a sober but upbeat analysis of the political, cultural, and economic foundations of the Atlantic relationship.

Nevertheless, we doubt that any campaign could make the public forget the importance, expense, and controversy surrounding NATO's military functions. We believe that a stress on Western cultural achievements would not obviate addressing the issue of West European funding for the military programs necessary to protect the Alliance's political and cultural values. The test of the Italian initiative, in our view, will be whether governments are willing to challenge publicly the common notion that West Europeans can regain a measure of control over their own security without making the sacrifices required to improve their military posture.

European media—there is a fear that either superpower, deliberately or through miscalculation, could start a conflict in which Europe would be destroyed. In our judgment, this phenomenon contributes to neutralist sentiment, particularly in West Germany.

Arms Control

Public opinion surveys demonstrate that West European trust in US arms control policies remains far higher than their regard for Soviet positions. Nevertheless, the West Europeans have already begun to scrutinize both superpowers' approaches to the

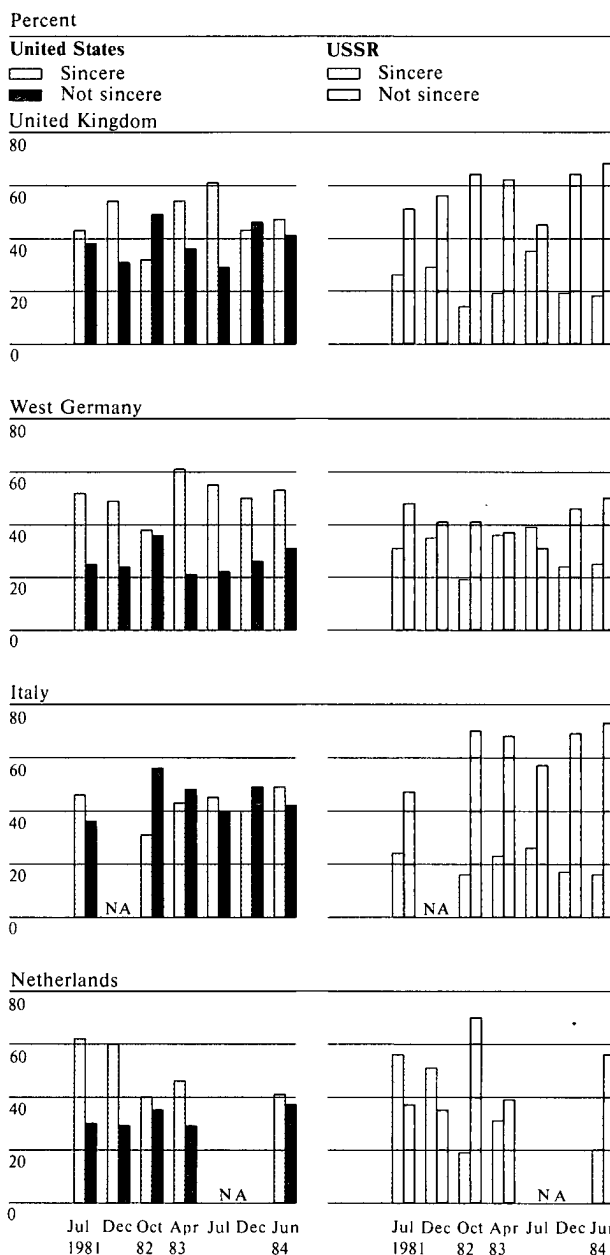
Geneva negotiations with an eye to regional concerns. We believe that the Allies will oppose Soviet efforts to hold arms control progress hostage to their efforts to scuttle the US Strategic Defense Initiative (see appendix). At the same time, officials and influential media commentators have already stressed that the Allies want INF talks to progress at least as fast as negotiations on SDI and central strategic systems.

On some other issues, West Europeans do not distinguish between NATO and Warsaw Pact arms control ideas. For example, they seem to support equally

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Figure 1
Superpower Sincerity in Arms Talks,
1981-84



strongly the militarily significant agreements proposed by NATO countries and the declaratory measures favored by the East at the Conference on Disarmament in Europe. Polling results indicate that at least 65 percent—and usually over 75 percent—support nonaggression pacts, nuclear-weapons-free zones, and bans on chemical and antisatellite weapons.

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Defense Spending

It is not surprising that relatively few West Europeans support increased expenditures for national security, because USIA surveys over the past 15 years have consistently shown that publics are complacent over the Soviet threat, confident (except West Germany) about US assistance in the worst case, and sympathetic to Peace Movement goals. The same data indicate that West Europeans prefer to spend money on social welfare rather than defense; only limited minorities support increasing defense expenditures. June 1984 USIA data show that more than 30 percent support defense spending *decreases* in Italy, Belgium, and West Germany:

	Your Country's Defense Spending Should Be . . .		
	Increased	Decreased	Kept at Present Level
United Kingdom	23	20	52
West Germany	7	33	58
Italy	18	42	34
Belgium	7	37	46
Denmark	14	22	53
Netherlands	8	29	49
Norway	30	21	29

(C NF)

In our judgment, several factors cause general West European opposition to defense spending increases:

- The welfare state retains strong public support, according to polls, and people oppose cutting social programs to pay for a strong defense.

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- Many West Europeans do not accept the peacekeeping function of Western defense structures. As analysts at the US Mission at NATO put it, many feel that "defense means war and war is always antipathetic."
- Some people, judging from press interviews and polls, think that any war in Europe would instantly escalate into a nuclear holocaust and that defense spending therefore is pointless as well as dangerous.

West Europeans oppose increased defense spending even though they favor strengthening NATO's conventional forces so as to reduce dependence on nuclear weapons. Respondents often support force improvements only until told by the pollster that this would require spending increases; survey data indicate that these people are largely unaware that conventional defense improvements cost more than nuclear force modernization. When given this information, respondents do not switch their support to nuclear forces, but rather oppose any force improvements. This reaction perhaps is conditioned by the belief—as reflected in other polls—that NATO's conventional forces are "adequate now."

Polling results indicate that large majorities of respondents in all countries believe that maintaining the East-West military balance is important. Majorities also believe that Western military strength has slipped relative to that of the Warsaw Pact, although younger West German respondents are more inclined than their elders to believe that NATO is stronger than the Warsaw Pact. In addition, according to USIA data, West European confidence in NATO's ability to defend Western Europe in case of attack has declined somewhat over the past 25 years. West European reluctance to increase defense spending despite these beliefs suggests that complacency about Soviet intentions and worries about the costs of a defense buildup outweigh public concern over the Soviet military buildup.

According to June 1984 USIA data, West Germans opposed conventional force improvements to replace nuclear weapons even when the pollster did not bring up the cost factor. In our judgment, this underscores the especially negative West German public attitude

toward security issues that clashes with a generally consistent support for NATO as a symbol of Western unity.

Similarly negative Danish public attitudes toward defense spending are so apparent that local press commentators have suggested the other Allies consider Denmark a weak link in the Alliance. At least two editorials in 1984 speculated that, unless the Danes build up their defenses, NATO might seize Denmark in time of war to prevent Soviet forces from doing so. The authors reminded their readers of Lord Nelson's destruction of the Danish fleet in 1801 to keep it out of Napoleon's clutches.

Polls suggest that Norwegians, on the other hand, are more willing than other West Europeans to spend for conventional force improvements. The recent Norwegian defense debate, after which government and leading opposition parties agreed to a 3.5-percent real increase in defense spending for 1985, is evidence that public support for a stronger NATO is reflected in Parliament as well.

Nuclear Weapons and Pacifism

Nuclear weapons are unpopular throughout Western Europe; support for pacifism is less clear. We consider useful the distinction drawn by academicians and politicians between the "nuclear allergy" and the broader concept of pacifism. Some West Europeans, while opposed to all nuclear weapons, support strengthening the Alliance's conventional strength. For example, polls illustrate that many in Norway are proud of their nonnuclear contributions to NATO but are deeply opposed to nuclear weapons deployment. Of the Norwegians responding to a spring 1983 poll, 82 percent declared their willingness to fight for their country in the event of war.

In some countries, moreover, even nuclear pacifism seems to be declining somewhat. In Belgium, for example, only 35 percent of the respondents to a May 1984 poll opposed the use of nuclear weapons under

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The French

France deserves special treatment in this analysis because of its role as a member of the Atlantic Alliance but a nonparticipant in NATO's military structure. Polls suggest that the French, while proud of their independent nuclear deterrent, do not overestimate their unilateral military potential and recognize that its credibility depends on cooperation with the United States and other Western countries. The French, nevertheless, are as vulnerable to pacifist sentiments as other West Europeans. []

A November 1983 Sofres poll conducted for the conservative daily Le Figaro reported that 39 percent of respondents believed French security is best served by "belonging to a military Alliance between the countries of Western Europe and the United States," as opposed to "an Alliance independent of the United States (21 percent)"; 26 percent favored neutrality. A plurality (47 percent vs. 39 percent) favored integration of the French nuclear force into a European defense community rather than "a totally independent national defense." []

A plurality (43 percent) opposed INF deployment, but 35 percent of the respondents to a 1983 Harris survey favored Pershing II deployment in France under French control, and a further 10 percent supported basing under NATO authority. Another 1983 poll suggested that the French elite was more favorable to INF, with 85 percent believing that deployment would "increase security and stability in Europe." []

Other polls demonstrate that the French are as confident as most other West Europeans that the United States will come to their aid in case of a Soviet attack—and want Washington to do so. In addition, 84 percent of the respondents to the 1983 elite poll—higher than in the other countries surveyed—supported defense spending increases. []

Public recognition of the importance of French ties to the West matches decisions by recent governments to permit greater coordination between French and NATO forces during maneuvers. The US Embassy in Paris reports that Prime Minister Fabius's September 1984 address on defense issues blurred the distinction between "NATO" and the "Atlantic Alliance," implying reduced concern to stress French independence. The Embassy felt that Prime Minister Fabius gave relatively short shrift to the Western

European Union, the current focus of attention for those seeking to increase West European—as opposed to Atlantic—defense cooperation. []

Nevertheless, the polls indicate that the French want to retain possession of an independent deterrent. Recent French media commentary suggests that journalists and government officials fear that the US Strategic Defense Initiative may make it obsolete. Some observers have proposed that France lead a joint effort to make Western Europe a "space power," an idea that would compromise French strategic independence. We believe that any such shift in doctrine would come only after a careful public relations campaign explaining it. []

While the French Government appears willing to talk tough, polling data suggest that the public does not support using its deterrent. Antinuclear sentiment was demonstrated by a 1983 Sofres poll taken three weeks after the Soviets shot down the Korean Airlines plane. The pollster concluded that "there is virtually no (6 percent) public support for the use of the independent French nuclear force as retaliation to a Soviet invasion of France." Fifty-eight percent believed that Paris should "immediately" initiate negotiations with Moscow in the event of such an attack. Only 26 percent favored responding with conventional weapons. []

These findings correspond with similar results dating back at least to 1980. By contrast, 54 percent of French respondents to the elite poll favored a NATO nuclear response to a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. []

French public support for a military response seems larger in case of a Soviet nuclear attack, according to a 1983 Harris poll. Fifty-two percent—higher than in any West European country except the United Kingdom—favored nuclear retaliation. Only 8 percent of the respondents to that poll favored a nuclear response to a conventional attack. []

These results suggest that officially expressed French concern with perceived West German pacifism stems in part from the fear that it may be contagious. In our view, the French, like other West Europeans, are vulnerable to Soviet proposals for a pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. []

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Table 3
Western Europe: Public Opinion
on Use of Nuclear Weapons

Percent

	United Kingdom		West Germany		Italy		Belgium			Netherlands			Denmark	Norway
	1982	1984	1982	1984	1982	1984	1981	1982	1984	1981	1982	1984	1984	1984
NATO should use nuclear weapons . . .														
Under no circumstances	30	24	38	44	38	41	47	51	35	50	37	36	43	30
Only if the Soviets use them first	45	51	33	42	40	44	26	28	34	31	32	30	35	48
Against an overwhelming conventional attack	19	18	16	11	14	9	16	14	14	11	16	16	7	11

any circumstances, a view that had drawn 51 percent support two years earlier. An October 1984 Gallup poll in the United Kingdom revealed that 63 percent of respondents considered "dangerous" the Labor Party's proposal to rid Britain of all nuclear weapons.

Polling data still, however, reflect a general reluctance to use nuclear weapons if the USSR mounts only a conventional attack; publics (outside West Germany) are more willing to use them after a Soviet nuclear strike. Moreover, the data (see table 3) indicate that since 1982 West Germans and Italians have become even more opposed to using nuclear weapons under any circumstances; British, Dutch, and Belgian respondents, on the other hand, have become less so since 1981.

According to USIA, West Europeans have strongly opposed the first use of nuclear weapons by NATO since at least 1955. This reluctance leads us to believe that the West Europeans are vulnerable to Soviet proposals, floated at the Stockholm Conference on Disarmament and Confidence Building in Europe, for an agreement barring the initial use of nuclear weapons. USIA reported in June 1984 that 74 percent or more of respondents in each country surveyed favored such an agreement.

Polls in West Germany considering only security issues—such as one conducted periodically by the

television program "Politbarometer"—support the USIA data in suggesting West Germans have been *both* attracted to pacifism and repelled by nuclear weapons. Between 1981 and 1984 those opposing unilateral steps toward disarmament dropped from 47 percent to 37 percent. Another poll indicated that the number of West Germans preferring surrender to the use of nuclear weapons on West German territory increased from 61 percent in 1977 to 71 percent in 1980. In a survey of West European elites taken in the spring of 1983, 35 percent of the West German respondents expressed the view that "military force should never be used"; less than 10 percent of respondents in France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom agreed.

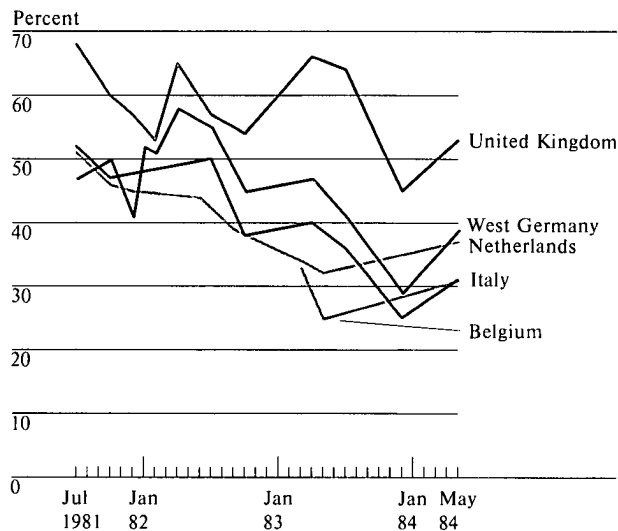
INF and the Peace Movement

It is clear from opinion polls that public opposition to INF deployment remains significant more than a year after the United States deployed the first missiles; according to 1984 data from several polls, the United Kingdom is the only basing country in which a majority of the public favors deployment. On the other hand, the decline in Peace Movement activism suggests that organized opposition to basing peaked in 1983. It probably has been dealt a further blow by the March 1985 Belgian decision to fulfill its basing commitments.

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Figure 2
Support of INF Deployment in
Western Europe, 1981-84

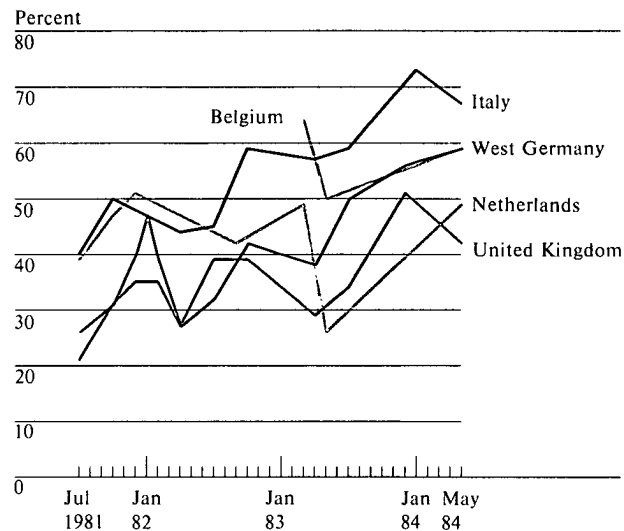


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According to a variety of polls, throughout the INF debate, majorities in all countries believed the missiles would be deployed. We believe that this attitude, coupled with the decline in Peace Movement effectiveness after initial deployments, produced a sense of resignation—if not acceptance—in West Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. [redacted]

Polling data reflect the decline in Peace Movement activism. They suggest that, while popular sympathy for Peace Movement goals remained strong, fewer supporters were willing to take part in its activities after initial deployment. According to one poll in June 1984, this was especially true in West Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. Peace Movement leaders recognize this trend and have expressed disappointment over the lack of attendance at recent activities. West German Peace Movement leaders have announced that they will cut back on activities in 1985 in favor of a "year of contemplation." Nevertheless, we believe that some militant activists, partly out of frustration over the decline in Peace Movement effectiveness, will try to continue their violent activity this year. [redacted]

Figure 3
Opposition to INF Deployment in
Western Europe, 1981-84



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INF deployment can proceed peacefully despite strong popular dissatisfaction; Italy and Belgium are two examples. USIA reported in June 1984 that 66 percent of the Italian respondents—the highest percentage in Europe—either opposed or strongly opposed deployment. Yet deployment has had a relatively easy time. Relatively lukewarm Italian Communist opposition, in our view, contributed significantly to Rome's ability to carry through on its commitment against the opinions of a majority of Italians. In particular, given the absence of a large anti-NATO faction in the Socialist Party and a relatively weak Green movement, we believe that lukewarm Italian Communist policy helped prevent the growth of a large Peace Movement. [redacted]

¹ There is evidence that the Italian Communists may take a similar line toward the Strategic Defense Initiative. The US Embassy in Rome reported in January 1985 that some party officials were impressed with the US position on SDI. A series of articles in the party daily *L'Unita* presented both sides of the issue in a relatively objective manner. We believe this position, if it lasts, will cause Soviet-PCI frictions similar to those over INF. [redacted]

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We believe that the Dutch public will follow the Italian pattern if their government should go through with its basing commitment. Polls demonstrate that the Dutch—even those opposed to cruise missile basing—believe that missile deployment is likely. We believe that Belgian agreement to carry through on its commitments marginally improves chances for a positive result in the Netherlands, given the widespread Dutch public expectation that deployment will proceed. Dutch Prime Minister Lubbers recently has expressed to US officials his view that deployment is increasingly acceptable to his constituents. While deployment looks more likely in the wake of the Belgian decision, we believe that public opinion will be only one factor in the Dutch decision scheduled for November 1985. The internal Dutch political situation as well as external factors—such as arms control progress and the level of Soviet SS-20 deployments—will largely determine the choice. []

Demographics

Survey data make it clear that attitudes toward security issues are influenced by a variety of factors, including party affiliation, education, and age. The importance of party affiliation in determining attitudes toward security issues is particularly clear in West Germany. An Allensbach poll in the fall of 1983 reported that 64 percent of CDU/CSU respondents preferred basing INF to leaving NATO, while only 34 percent of SPD respondents agreed; 51 percent of CDU/CSU voters but only 15 percent of SPD supporters favored INF deployment in any case. []

Education is another important determinant of attitudes on security issues. We note the West German example as fairly typical of the general West European trend. USIA reported in December 1984 that university-educated West Germans, at least since 1980, have consistently expressed less confidence in US policies than has the general public, and several polls indicate that the Peace Movement draws more support in all countries from the better educated. []

It is less clear whether age plays as important a part in determining West German attitudes toward security issues. An August 1984 Emnid poll in West

Table 4 Percent
Italy: Respondents Who Believe NATO
Is Essential, by Age Group, 1976-81

	"Young"	"Middle Aged"	"Older"
1976	47	42	46
1977	42	34	63
1978	60	56	61
1981	65	76	60

Germany suggests that 16- to 24-year-olds have changed their views on security issues since 1983 and may be less hostile toward Western security policies than those in the 24-35 bracket. According to Emnid, only 30 percent of the younger group considered the Soviet threat to be "serious" or "very serious" in 1983; 42 percent did so one year later. In 1983, 55 percent wanted the United States to withdraw its troops from Europe; only 39 percent felt this way in 1984. Emnid found similar shifts in attitudes toward the proposition that INF deployment increases West German security (18 percent in 1983 vs. 42 percent in 1984) and the opposing proposition that deployment increases the probability of Soviet attack (54 percent in 1983 vs. 26 percent in 1984). We cannot be sure of the reason for this shift. []

Data also suggest that "younger" Italians grew *more* likely to find NATO "essential" between 1976 and 1981 (see table 4). This trend coincides with the growing Italian Communist public acceptance of Italy's role in the Alliance, perhaps supporting the hypothesis that the PCI position on security issues is crucial to the propagation of pro-NATO attitudes among Italian youth, as well as to overall Italian cooperation with NATO policies. []

The murkiness of the generational question is further illustrated by April 1983 data indicating the age breakdown of Peace Movement activists in four West European countries. While it is clear that most are

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Table 5
Effect of INF Deployment
on European Security, 1983

Percent

	West Germany	United Kingdom	France	Netherlands
Security and stability in Europe would . . .				
Increase	40	37	85	40
Decrease	46	41	11	33
Not change much	11	22	3	26

under 50, differences between those on either side of 30 vary according to country:

	Percent		
	Under 30	30-49	50 and Over
West Germany	64	27	9
Netherlands	35	43	22
Belgium	44	32	24
Italy	36	39	25

Elites

Elites appear to differ from the general publics on some security issues. An August 1983 poll commissioned by the International Institute for Social Research in West Berlin reported on elite attitudes in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and West Germany, as well as the United States. West European elites—government officials and leaders in the business, academic, and political communities—proved more willing than general publics to spend more on defense, but were just as interested in pursuing detente with the East. While most agreed with their publics on the question of arms control, 57 percent of the West German respondents felt that arms control currently has “too much importance” in their country’s policies; 49 percent felt the same way about detente. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, 65 percent of elite respondents felt arms control did not receive adequate treatment; 54 percent said the same about detente.

On other issues, this poll reported findings in line with opinions expressed by general publics. More than 60

percent in each country agreed that NATO is “useful,” and 70 percent of the West German respondents supported a nuclear freeze and agreements barring the first use of nuclear weapons. Almost a quarter of the West German elite (23 percent) was favorably inclined toward neutrality (21 percent of the British respondents agreed). While most members of these elites did not fear that Washington would abandon its NATO commitment, more than 40 percent in each country felt that the United States would “reduce” it. The pollster reported that these opinion leaders showed little consensus about what to do if in the future the US nuclear guarantee is no longer viable.

Sixty percent of these elite respondents said they were “not concerned” about nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, 68 percent of these “unconcerned” expressed opposition to INF deployment. In addition, pluralities of elite respondents in the United Kingdom and West Germany felt that deployment would decrease “security and stability in Europe.” A plurality of Dutch elite respondents did not agree, providing evidence, in our judgment, that at least some in the Netherlands are not as hostile to NATO security policies as is the Parliament.

As a whole, respondents were almost evenly split between those who thought deployment would increase or decrease European security (see table 5). Fifty-nine percent of those believing it will increase

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Table 6
Confidence of Better Educated West Germans in US
Foreign Policy, Compared With General Public Attitudes

Percent

Survey Date	Great Deal/Fair Amount		Not Very Much/None at All	
	Better Educated	General Public	Better Educated	General Public
March 1981	41	54	57	34
October 1981	29	43	68	42
December 1981	25	34	67	48
January 1982	30	37	67	50
April 1982	30	55	67	36
July 1982	30	40	68	52
December 1982	38	48	56	42
April 1983	19	35	70	53
June 1983	31	31	67	48
July/August 1983	28	35	70	59
December 1983	23	34	73	53
June 1984	32	41	63	52
October 1984	16	34	73	51
November 1984	31	47	69	52
December 1984	29	38	65	49

stability supported the notion that NATO should increase its nuclear arsenal to negotiate from strength. Those believing that INF deployment will decrease stability were nearly unanimous in disagreeing. (We discount the French data in this poll because only 12 percent of those queried responded.)

We believe that the West German elite, like the West German public as a whole, is particularly skeptical of US and NATO security policies. USIA data indicate that university-educated West Germans have an even more negative attitude toward US foreign policy and its effect on peace than do their compatriots (see tables 6 and 7).

Conclusions and Implications

Public opinion data support the trend noted by academic and media commentators suggesting that, despite their underlying support for their countries' US and NATO links, West European publics—with the exception of the British and, to some extent, the

Norwegians and Dutch—have become increasingly skeptical of Western security policies. The polls indicate that West Europeans retain a much more favorable view of the United States than of the Soviet Union and that only pacifist minorities believe that Washington and Moscow are “morally equivalent.” But we believe that—in the wake of the INF debate and growing fears of nuclear war—more West Europeans are likely to judge that both superpowers, in practical terms, are equally dangerous.

We think this fear is leading larger numbers of West Europeans to believe that they need to gain greater control over their own security and—while not withdrawing from NATO—to free the continent from its perceived role as a theater of US-Soviet rivalry. To accomplish this, since most West Europeans do not want their governments to match US or Soviet military strength, we believe they will focus their efforts on reducing superpower military forces. This will

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Table 7

Percent

**Views of Better Educated West Germans
on the Effects of US Policy on Peace,
Compared With General Public Attitudes**

Survey Date	Promotes Peace		Increases Risk of War	
	Better Educated	General Public	Better Educated	General Public
January 1982	16	37	67	36
April 1982	16	46	67	33
July 1982	30	32	41	33
April 1983	28	31	55	38
July 1983	24	27	60	48
December 1983	15	26	68	41
June 1984	27	33	55	40
November 1984	45	53	50	42
December 1984	26	35	54	32

translate, in our view, into continued suspicion of Western arms modernization programs—particularly those initiated by the United States—and pressure for arms control and disarmament initiatives covering virtually every category of weapons system.

Polling data suggest that Belgians, West Germans, and Italians—particularly considering their attitudes toward defense spending—are especially susceptible to arguments against arms modernization programs. In our view, should the Italian Communist Party decide to forgo its effort to appear “responsible” on security issues, it would strike a chord among Italian voters and cause public opinion to turn further away from NATO. We believe that support for NATO military policies, particularly nuclear policies, among the West German elite and general public already has declined significantly, although it is difficult to gauge whether this is a permanent phenomenon and the extent to which it depends on changes in the East-West climate. On the other hand, Norwegians—perhaps because they share a border with the Soviet Union—are the West Europeans most immune to antidefense attitudes, nuclear weapons excepted.

Opportunity and Challenge

It is remarkable that, in the face of these shifts, NATO itself remains a popular organization. We

suspect that Allied publics will continue to connect the Alliance with “Western” values they cherish and will be repelled by the contrasting image of Soviet human rights violations and repression in Eastern Europe. It is less surprising that the United States continues to be popular; polls indicate that West Europeans deeply respect US society and political institutions. Norwegian responses leave particular room for encouragement because they suggest that anti-NATO and anti-US sentiment there is less pervasive among the broader public than among vocal minorities.

The crucial question is whether the powerful symbolic attraction of the United States and NATO will fade as West Europeans identify the Alliance with unpopular policies, or whether official public relations efforts can make these policies more generally acceptable (in the way that publics have become resigned—while still opposed—to INF deployment). We believe that this will depend, in part, on the willingness of West European leaders to identify important arms modernization initiatives as the underpinning of the positive symbolic value of NATO as an Alliance and the United States as an ally. In addition, we believe it

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important that Allied governments become more willing to challenge the favorable image of the Peace Movement and attack the implications for national and Western security of its antimilitary assumptions. We believe that developments in this area also will depend on whether the new Soviet leadership is able to improve Moscow's image in Western Europe. [REDACTED]

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The declining participation in the Peace Movement suggests to us that a forthright endorsement of NATO and US policies by West European governments can mold a more favorable West European public opinion on many issues if the governments have the will to do so. Defense spending is the critical exception; we doubt that even maximum government efforts to promote increased expenditures for national security can overcome high levels of public resistance. Governments may be able to convince publics to spend money on specific modernization projects, but overall defense spending is unlikely to rise significantly. [REDACTED]

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Appendix

Preliminary Data on SDI

The US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) has become the major issue in West European diplomatic discussion and press discourse; it is not clear whether it has yet seized West European public opinion. According to a USIA poll taken in February and March 1985, majorities of British, West German, Belgian, and Dutch respondents had heard little or nothing at all about SDI:

	Percent	
	Great Deal/ Fair Amount	Not Very Much/ None at All
United Kingdom	46	51
West Germany	33	54
Italy	50	49
Belgium	39	53
Netherlands	29	57
Denmark	50	41

In our view, this indicates that governments have the opportunity to mold positive public views on the issue—should they decide to do so.

Outside of Denmark, pluralities thought that the development of a strategic defense system is a good idea. We judge that the *concept* of strategic defense currently generates a sympathetic public response. A Gallup poll taken in February indicated that 53 percent of British respondents disagreed (only 25 percent agreed) with the notion that the threat to blow up Soviet cities is a surer way to prevent Moscow from starting a war than having new weapons in space. A 48-percent plurality, however, doubted that SDI would make them “safer.”

The relatively high negative response in Italy indicates that—as on other issues—Italians could prove to be less supportive of US or NATO policies than other larger Allied publics. As illustrated by table 8, Italians, more than other West Europeans, are inclined to believe that SDI:

- Decreases West European security.
- Accelerates the arms race.
- Increases the risk of war.

USIA analysts consider unusual the number of “undecideds” on the consequences of SDI development, further indication that West Europeans have yet to form firm views on SDI. We note that fewer Italians than other West Europeans have no opinion.

A *Yomiuri*-Gallup poll in March also suggested that Allied publics have not yet made up their minds about SDI—at least regarding its effect on the risk of nuclear war (see table 9). This poll provided an initial look at Japanese and French attitudes. British respondents to this survey were more negative toward SDI than those reflected in the USIA data.

The USIA poll indicates that West Europeans may not share their governments’ expressed concerns that SDI could decouple US and West European security. More seemed to support the idea that Washington would come to their defense than those responding to a 1984 USIA question that did not include SDI in the equation (see table 10). It should be noted that the pollster removed from the question the concept that US aid to West European defense could risk destruction of US cities. It is not clear if the pollster asked whether publics believed that the program is technically feasible

Other preliminary information suggests the importance of determining whether respondents believe that SDI is meant to defend Western Europe and whether the program will work. A Gallup poll taken in the United Kingdom in January and February 1985 found that 58 percent of respondents felt that SDI would protect only the United States—23 percent believed it would protect both the United States and Western Europe. A 43-percent plurality doubted that “it will ever be possible to defend against a nuclear attack by such means,” but 40 percent disagreed with the contention that the plan “can never be made to work.”

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Table 8

Percent

West European Views of SDI

	United Kingdom	West Germany	Italy	Belgium	Netherlands	Denmark
General impression						
A good idea	51	48	43	46	32	27
A bad idea	25	23	36	24	28	36
Neither good nor bad (volunteered)	12	NEGL	14	NEGL	13	12
Don't know	12	30	7	30	27	25
Perceived effects of SDI development						
On West European security						
Increases security of Western Europe	46	39	37	40	33	26
Decreases security of Western Europe	28	22	44	32	30	27
Undecided	26	39	19	27	37	47
On chances for arms control agreement						
Increases chances of arms control agreement	31	35	30	37	22	15
Accelerates the arms race	44	35	56	32	41	49
Undecided	25	31	14	31	37	36
On risk of nuclear war						
Decreases risk	26	27	25	28	17	17
Increases risk	22	20	43	22	23	24
Makes no difference	41	31	23	31	36	31
Undecided	11	22	9	18	24	28

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Table 9

Percent

SDI and Nuclear War

	United Kingdom	West Germany	France	Japan
SDI . . .				
Will reduce chance of nuclear war (Japan: Agree with SDI)	20	25	21	11
Will increase chance of nuclear war (Japan: Oppose SDI)	27	22	13	23
Don't know if it's good or bad (Japan: Cannot answer)	32	25	31	31
Know little/don't know about SDI	21	28	35	35

Source: Yomiuri-Gallup poll, March 1985

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Table 10 *Percent*
Trust in US Defense Pledge,
May/June 1984 and February 1985 ^a

	United Kingdom		West Germany		Italy		Belgium		Netherlands		Denmark	
	1984	1985	1984	1985	1984	1985	1984	1985	1984	1985	1984	1985
US would defend	52	58	27	48	58	57	46	51	41	59	45	46
US would not defend	43	24	63	20	39	28	43	24	42	14	43	25
Don't know	4	17	9	32	3	15	12	25	17	27	12	29

^a February 1985: "If the US deploys an effective defense against nuclear missiles, do you think they would still come to the defense of (survey country) in case of a Soviet attack or do you think they would not come to our defense?"

May/June 1984: "If the Soviet Union were to attack Western Europe, how much confidence do you have that the US would do whatever is necessary to defend (survey country) *even if this would risk the destruction of US cities—a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?*"



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Table 11 *Percent*
SDI: Needed Deterrent or
Bargaining Chip?

	United Kingdom	West Germany	Italy	Belgium	Netherlands	Denmark
SDI should not be given up	32	31	18	28	18	14
SDI important primarily as a bargaining chip	47	39	61	31	46	38
Don't know	21	31	21	41	36	47



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The same publics who believed that SDI development could strengthen US inclination to defend Western Europe also preferred that SDI be a bargaining chip rather than an untouchable military development program (see table 11). In our view, this probably reflects overriding West European support for the concept of arms control as well as the preliminary nature of the data. It may also indicate that future polls should determine whether respondents believe that the program is technically feasible. We note the large number of "undecideds," as well as the particular inclination of Italians to see the program as a bargaining chip.

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